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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000965

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [OSCE](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: PRO-KURDISH DTP EXPECTS ELECTORAL SUCCESS
DESPITE CAMPAIGN OF PRESSURE

REF: A. ANKARA 574

[1](#)B. ANKARA 559

[1](#)C. ANKARA 653

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner, reasons 1.4(b)(d)

1.(C) Summary: A not-so-subtle campaign of arrests, detentions, and harassment against pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) suspiciously coincided with the party's decision to consider running its candidates as independents in this year's parliamentary elections. Both the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and traditional state establishment stand to gain from such tactics; neither relish the prospect of DTP gains, and both want to show they are "doing something" to address continued PKK activity in Northern Iraq. A number of DTPers pro-PKK statements have facilitated this campaign. Although AKP is expected to make inroads in Turkey's southeast, DTP remains strong in the region, as its success in 2004 local elections demonstrated. If DTP can organize its base to vote for DTP candidates running as independents, it has a shot at winning some seats in parliament. The current pressure campaign will not make that task easy. End summary.

Pressure Against DTP Continues

2.(C) Pressure against DTP has continued unabated since the party decided at its February 28 convention to consider running its parliamentary candidates as independents to circumvent the 10 percent electoral threshold. According to Orhan Miroglu, DTP's Vice Chair for Foreign Relations, the series of arrests, detentions, and prosecutions against DTP leaders peaked near the March 21 Nevruz holiday, when security forces detained DTP provincial chairmen in Mardin, Van, Izmir, Siirt, and Batman, as well as scores of subprovincial chairmen (reftels). Amid rising tension, DTP urged restraint. As a result, Nevruz passed relatively peacefully and Turkish Kurds efforts to express their cultural peacefully attracted the desired international attention.

3.(C) Miroglu told us DTP believed AKP bears most responsibility for the increased pressure, though the state establishment also played a role. AKP and high-level officials in the Ministries of Interior and Justice, the

military, police, and jandarma all viewed DTP's strategy of running independents as increasing the party's chances of winning more than the 20 seats necessary to form a party group in parliament, he explained.

4.(C) DTP believes that recent elections demonstrate it can win 25-30 seats with an "independent" strategy, according to Miroglu. In the 2002 parliamentary elections, DTP's forerunner party DEHAP won over 50 percent of the vote in many southeastern provinces. In the 2004 local elections, the party won overwhelming majorities of approximately 60-75 percent in Hakkari, Diyarbakir, and Batman. A recent AKP poll gave DTP members reason for optimism. When asked if they would vote for DTP, only 2.7 percent said yes. The number jumped to 7.8 percent, however, when asked if they would vote for a DTP candidate running as an independent. Though DTP "as an institution" had not formally decided to run its candidates as independents, Miroglu said the party is leaning toward that strategy. DTP is courting members of civil society and academia who support solving the "Kurdish problem" democratically to run as independents under one umbrella.

AKP's Possible Electoral Gains in Southeast

5.(C) Several Kurdish contacts unaffiliated with DTP expect DTP to lose votes to AKP in the Southeast. Hasim Hasimi, a former ANAP MP and Mayor of Cizre, said DTP's link to the PKK has led to a decline in its popularity, as evidenced by the lower than expected turnouts at this year's Nevruz events (ref B). Internal friction has also weakened DTP, according to Hakkari Kurdish lawyer Rojbin Tugan. The "moderate" wing

ANKARA 00000965 002 OF 002

of the party achieved a victory over the "radical" wing at the party's February 28 convention by re-electing moderate Chairman Ahmet Turk, who supports distancing the party from the PKK, Tugan said (ref A).

6.(C) AKP's popularity in the Southeast has increased, according to these contacts. Hasimi told us a common perception is that DTP mayors in the Southeast have failed to deliver on promises, while AKP has produced concrete results that have improved lives, such as paved roads and running water in villages.

7.(C) AKP MP and party co-chair Dengir Mir Firat told us he expects AKP's increased popularity in the Southeast to translate into success at the polls in the upcoming elections. AKP, through its KOYDES program, had brought basic services such as running water and paved roads to over 600 southeast villages since coming to power in 2002. While problems obviously still exist in southeastern Turkey, voters are likely to acknowledge the tangible results AKP brought to them. The only face of government to which they are accustomed is the military; suddenly government is providing services. Firat expected AKP to expand on its 2004 electoral results in the region, when it won mayorships and strong majorities in several southeast provinces, such as Van, Siirt, and Gaziantep.

8.(C) In contrast, Miroglu downplayed AKP's popularity in the Southeast. He told us AKP had not initiated a comprehensive development plan for the Southeast, as reflected by high unemployment -- in Diyarbakir, for example, unemployment is 40 times the national average. AKP has benefited because the public does not blame AKP for past problems during the GOT's 1990's counterinsurgency against the PKK, and because it does not pursue a "racist, chauvinistic" program.

9.(C) Comment: Several factors are contributing to the growing pressure on the DTP: neither AKP nor the state establishment relishes the prospect of DTP gains in this year's elections and prosecutions neutralize key DTP leaders

and discredit them in the public's eyes. A number of more radical DTPers have made this job easier by making pro-PKK and pro-Ocalan statements. In addition, all GOT and state elements are disturbed by continued PKK activity in Northern Iraq and the growing assertiveness of northern Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) over Kirkuk. Striking at those they perceive to be the PKK's allies inside Turkey is a means for government and state to demonstrate they are "doing something" without incurring the military and diplomatic costs of an incursion across the Iraqi border.

10.(C) Comment continued: Although AKP is likely to make inroads in the Southeast in the elections, our contacts' predictions of a significant voter shift in the region is probably overstated. DTP's success in 2004 local elections makes it the favorite in the region, provided it can organize its base to vote for independents. It is their only viable alternative. As the polling numbers indicate, many would not want to "waste" their votes if DTP ran as a party. The current campaign of not-so-subtle pressure will not make that task easy. End comment.

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